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#1
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THE ORIGIN OF
HORDAK
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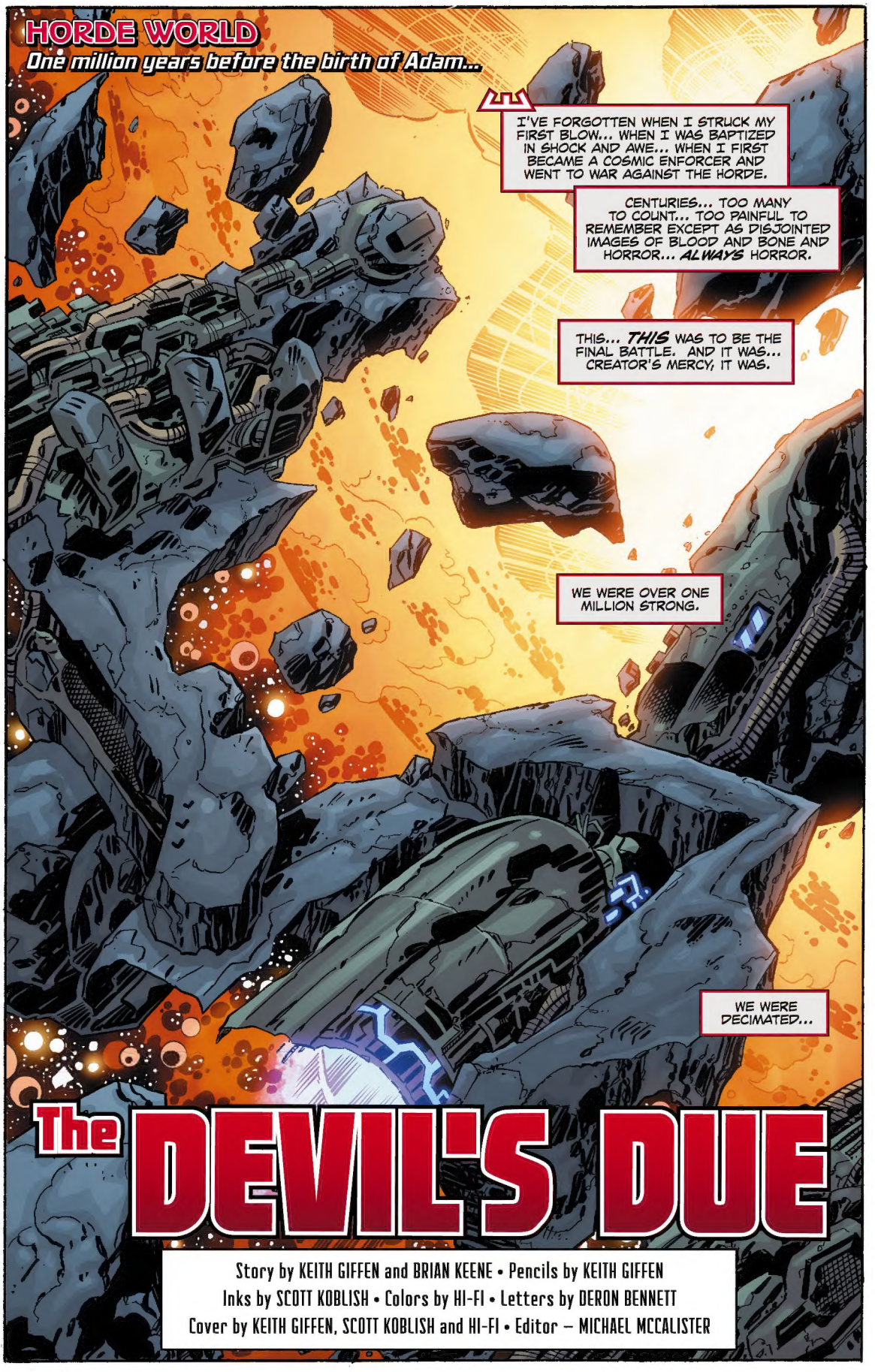

HORDE WORLD
One million years before the birth of Adam...
I'VE FORGOTTEN WHEN I STRUCK MY FIRST BLOW... WHEN I WAS BAPTIZED IN SHOCK AND AWE... WHEN I FIRST BECAME A COSMIC ENFORCER AND WENT TO WAR AGAINST THE HORDE.
CENTURIES... TOO MANY TO COUNT... TOO PAINFUL TO REMEMBER EXCEPT AS DISJOINTED IMAGES OF BLOOD AND BONE AND HORROR... ALWAYS HORROR.
THIS... THIS WAS TO BE THE FINAL BATTLE. AND IT WAS... CREATOR'S MERCY, IT WAS.
WE WERE OVER ONE MILLION STRONG.
WE WERE DECIMATED...
The DEVIL'S DUE

Story by KEITH GIFFEN and BRIAN KEENE • Pencils by KEITH GIFFEN
Inks by SCOTT KOBLISH • Colors by HI-FI • Letters by DERON BENNETT
Cover by KEITH GIFFEN, SCOTT KOBLISH and HI-FI • Editor – MICHAEL MCCALISTER

...AS WERE THEY.

APOCALYPSE... AN ORCHESTRATED APOCALYPSE.

HORDAK... HE INVITED THIS... BROUGHT THIS DOWN ON HIS OWN. WE WERE BUT THE MEANS... HOW COULD WE HAVE BEEN SO EASILY LED TO THIS?

OUR INTELLIGENCE WAS FLAWED... FATALLY FLAWED YET...

IT WAS WHAT WE WANTED TO BELIEVE... WHAT WE ***NEEDED*** TO BELIEVE.

CENTURIES OF WARFARE... IT WAS ALL WE KNEW.

AND WE KNEW IT WELL. WE HAD... LONG AGO FORGOTTEN HOW TO MAKE PEACE.

WE WERE OVER A MILLION STRONG...

EACH A GREATER FOOL THAN THE ONE BEFORE. NOT ONE SEEING THE TRUE APOCALYPSE, THE DIVINE REVELATION... THAT YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW!

MUTUAL GENOCIDE. NO... NOT GENOCIDE... NOT YET. HORDAK... THE BEAST STILL LIVES...

... I STILL LIVE.
CURSE ME TO THE SEVEN HELLS... I STILL LIVE!
TSSHHHHH

Z-ZODAC. COSMIC ENFORCER: 097-427-09. SECOND... SECOND PLATOON OUT OF OVERKILL BATTALION 657.
RESPOND.
P-PLEASE RESPOND.
ANYONE...

WHAT HAVE WE DONE?
RHETORICAL. ONE LOOK AT THE DEVASTATION SURROUNDING ME, IT'S PRETTY DAMN EVIDENT WHAT WE'VE DONE...
... THE VERY THING WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO DO EVER SINCE THE BEAST FIRST DREW BLOOD.

NO. THE HORDE MAY BE NO MORE, BUT THE BEAST... HORDAK...
I CAN FEEL ITS ESSENCE, STILL VITAL... STILL STRONG.
INTOLERABLE.

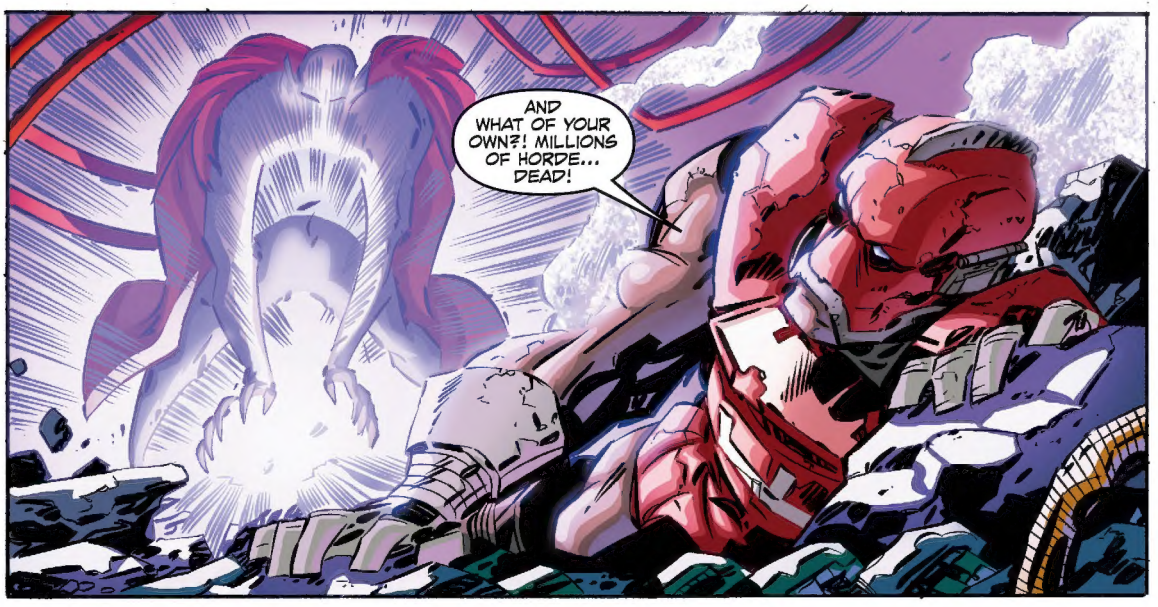
SO MANY PROPHECIES, SO MANY FAR SEERS CLAIMING TO KNOW THE WAYS OF DESTINY. DID *ANY* FORESEE THIS?
COULD *ANY* HAVE FORESEEN THIS AND STILL BE CALLED SANE?
SSHH-TOOM!
H-HNGH!

THRICE DAMNED FOOL! DID YOU THINK IT BLIND LUCK OR CREATOR'S BENEVOLENCE THAT *YOU* SURVIVED!?
YOU AND YOU ALONE!?
H-HORDAK...

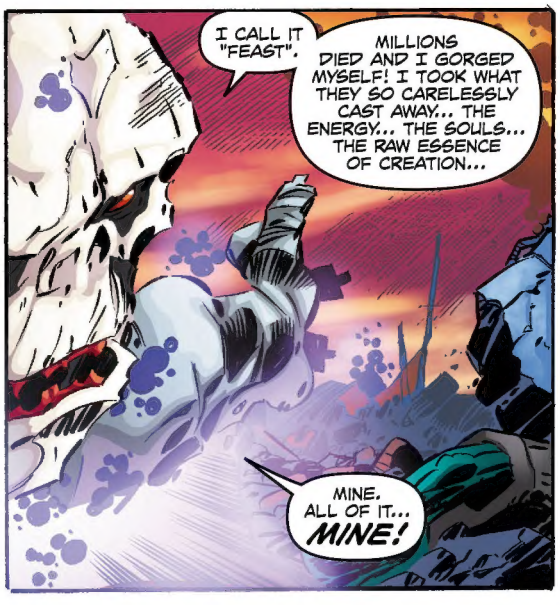
IT WAS HORDAK'S WILL AND HORDAK'S WILL ALONE THAT BROUGHT YOU TO THIS MOMENT!
WHO PROVOKED THIS WAR!? WHO WHISPERED OF A HORDE RIVEN BY WEAKNESS AND FEAR TO YOU AND YOURS WHILE YOU SLEPT!?

NO! WE'VE PSI-BARRIERS! OUR MINDS ARE CLOSED TO YOUR VILE -
AND SO I LET YOU BELIEVE. I'VE *AMBITIONS,* ENFORCER!

AMBITIONS THAT DO *NOT* INCLUDE YOU NOR YOUR ILK!


AND WHAT OF YOUR OWN?! MILLIONS OF HORDE... DEAD!

NOT DEAD! TRANSFORMED! HORDE AND ENFORCER ALIKE! FROM ENERGY WERE THEY BORN AS MATTER AND TO ENERGY DO THEY RETURN AFTER DEATH!
THERE ARE SOME WHO CALL THIS ENERGY "SOUL".


I CALL IT "FEAST".
MILLIONS DIED AND I GORGED MYSELF! I TOOK WHAT THEY SO CARELESSLY CAST AWAY... THE ENERGY... THE SOULS... THE RAW ESSENCE OF CREATION...
MINE. ALL OF IT... MINE!

YOU KNEW WHAT I WAS AND STILL YOU CAME, BOLSTERED BY MY LIES, EMBOLDENED BY MY DECEPTIONS... ONE MILLION FOOLS.
THEY ROIL WITHIN ME. ALL OF THEM CONSUMED TO SERVE MY AMBITIONS.

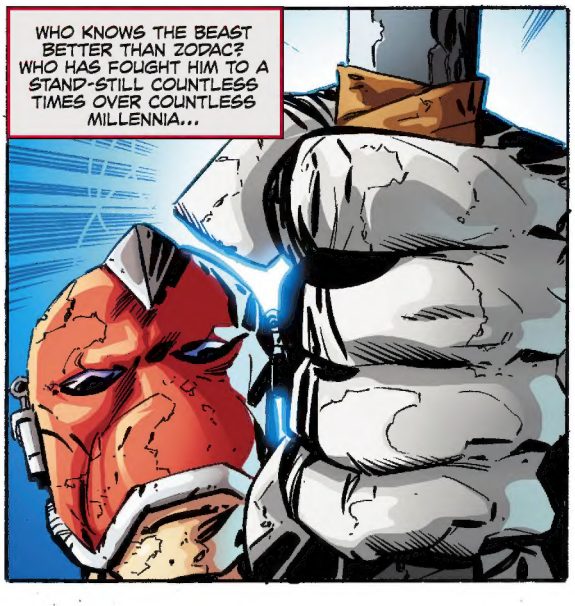
COME TO ME ZODAC! THE FINAL PROPHECY AWAITS.
ZMM!

FINAL PROPHECY...
"THERE WILL COME A DAY WHEN THE OLD GODS SHALL PASS FROM THE REALM...

... AND THE AVATAR OF ALL THAT IS GOOD SHALL DO BATTLE WITH THE AVATAR OF ALL THAT IS EVIL; AND SO WILL THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE BE CAST."
MADNESS. HORDAK HAS LET HIS MONSTROUS HUBRIS LEAD HIM INTO MADNESS.

BE THAT AS IT MAY, THERE IS STILL UNFINISHED BUSINESS BETWEEN US. MAD OR NO, THE BEAST MUST PERISH.
THE SOULS OF THOSE CONSUMED MUST BE FREED.

IT ENDS. NOW.


WHO KNOWS THE BEAST BETTER THAN ZODAC? WHO HAS FOUGHT HIM TO A STAND-STILL COUNTLESS TIMES OVER COUNTLESS MILLENNIA...

NO MORE...
I AM NOT MY BROTHER'S KEEPER.
IT ENDS TODAY.

DO YOU SEE, FATHER!? DO YOU SEE WHAT HAS BECOME OF THE SON YOU SPURNED, THE SCION YOU CAST AWAY!?
HE COMES! FILLED TO BRIMMING WITH RIGHTEOUS RAGE HE COMES; VENGEANCE INCARNATE!
AND TELL ME ***SCOURED PATRIARCH,*** DID HE NOT RECOGNIZE YOU IN SUCH A...***DIMINISHED STATE*** OR DID HE ***CHOOSE*** NOT TO ACKNOWLEDGE YOU!?

WHOSE FACE WILL HE SEE SHOULD HE BE THE ONE TO STRIKE THE DEATH BLOW!? THE "MUCH BELOVED" BROTHER OR THE "MOST HONORED" FATHER!?

MY ANTICIPATION BURNS!

SEE HOW HE PERSEVERES! SEE HOW HE CLINGS TO SCANT HOPE, HOW IT DRIVES HIM FORWARD, HOW IT FORCES HIM TO ME!

HE COMES TO ANOINT ME, FATHER! BY HIS BLOOD SHALL I BE CORONATED MASTER OF ALL...
... MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE!
HA HA HA HA HA

HAS THERE EVER BEEN A PLACE SO FOUL AS THIS, THIS LAIR OF THE BEAST....THIS FRIGHT ZONE.
THE AIR ITSELF CLINGS LIKE A PARASITE... THE WHISPERS...
... THE DENIED, FORBIDDEN FROM PARADISE, BARRED FROM DAMNATION. HORDAK'S CHOIR, BOUND TO THIS PLACE, THEIR LAMENTATIONS A WARNING TO ALL WHO SEEK OUT THE BEAST...
... THIS WAY LIES MADNESS.
SKREEEEEEEEE
LEECH!
RR-RUNCH!!

THWASH!
SHRIEKING ABOMINATION! WHAT CHARNEL PIT DID YOU COWER IN THAT YOU LIVE WHILE YOUR HORDE BRETHREN LIE DEAD!?

SHAK!
WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH, DARK SPAWN!?
DO YOU HOPE TO PETITION YOUR MASTER'S FORGIVENESS BY BRINGING ME BEFORE HIM AS A BLEAK OFFERING!?

FOOL AND *TWICE* A FOOL!
THWA-BOOM

HORDAK HAS CLAIMED ME AS HIS. YOU ARE BUT AN UNPLEASANT DIVERSION.
A DIVERSION THAT SHOULD NOT LEAVE ME FEELING THIS DRAINED. DOES THE BEAST SEEK TO TIP THE SCALES BY WAY OF DARK MAGICKS?

OR IS IT THE FETID MIASMA THAT ENVELOPES THIS FOULED LAIR? IT PULLS AT ONE'S VERY SOUL...
NO HOPE... NO HOPE...

LIES!
WHERE THERE IS LIFE THERE WILL ALWAYS BE HOPE!

AND WHAT OF HORDAK!? DOES HORDAK NOT LIVE!? DOES HORDAK TRAFFIC IN HOPE!?
FASTER, BROTHER! I GROW IMPATIENT! I WOULD SEE THIS ENDED!
HNGH!
ZZAK

ENDED... YES. FINALLY ENDED...

PROFANE LIGHT... THE ESSENCE OF CORRUPTION. HE IS WITHIN...
ARCH FOE, DARK DISCIPLE, BLASPHEMOUS SCOURGE...
...BROTHER.
BLOOD TO BLOOD! AS IT WAS MEANT TO BE! AS IT WAS FORETOLD!
"AND THE AVATAR OF ALL THAT IS GOOD SHALL DO BATTLE WITH THE AVATAR OF ALL THAT IS EVIL; AND SO WILL THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE BE CAST..."
IN MY IMAGE, BROTHER! THE UNIVERSE SHALL BE REMOLDED IN *MY* IMAGE!

A GOD!? IS THAT WHAT YOUR MONSTROUS EGO HAS LED YOU TO? DELUSIONS OF GODHOOD!?
SHAK-T!

NOT A GOD... THE GOD!
FR AKT

MADNESS...
DIVINE MADNESS, BROTHER!

MINE IS THE POWER OF THE MILLIONS SACRIFICED TO MY GLORY!
LIVES GIVEN THAT I SHOULD KNOW THIS MOMENT!
NO WEAPON CAN HARM ME!
KRUNCH

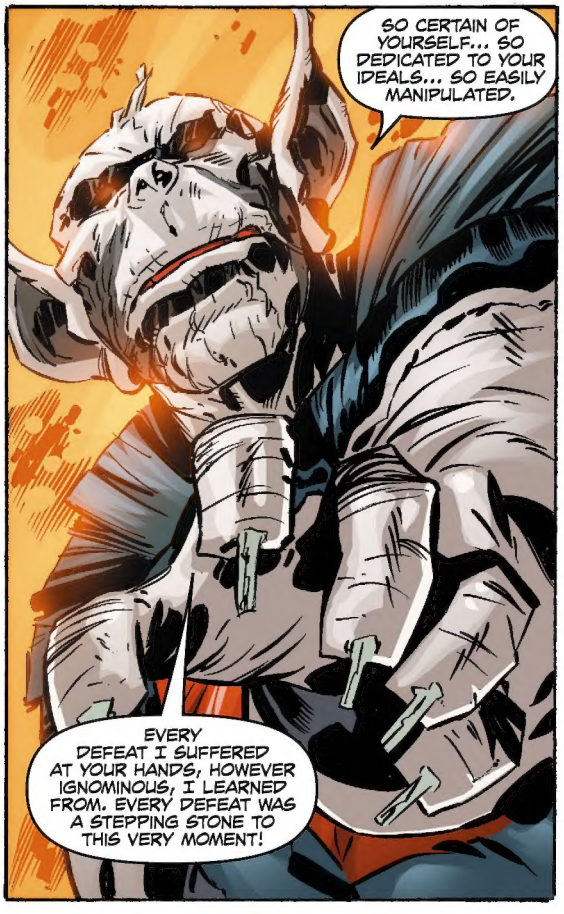
THAT IT WAS *YOU* WHO LED THEM TO MY DARK ALTAR... YOU OF *ALL* BEINGS WHO BROUGHT THEM TO ME, EACH BOUND TO YOU BY TRUST, EACH DOOMED BY THAT SAME TRUST...
SHKOOM!

TELL ME, ZODAC, HOW DOES IT FEEL TO KNOW *YOU* WERE MY HIGH PRIEST!?
NO...

THAT WERE IT NOT FOR YOU, THIS MOMENT MIGHT NEVER HAVE COME!? THAT YOU WERE...
INDISPENSABLE!
THWOOM!

LIES... ALL L-LIES...

YOU WERE ALWAYS THE IMPETUOUS ONE. THE FIRST TO ACT, THE LAST TO REPENT.
KR-RRNCH

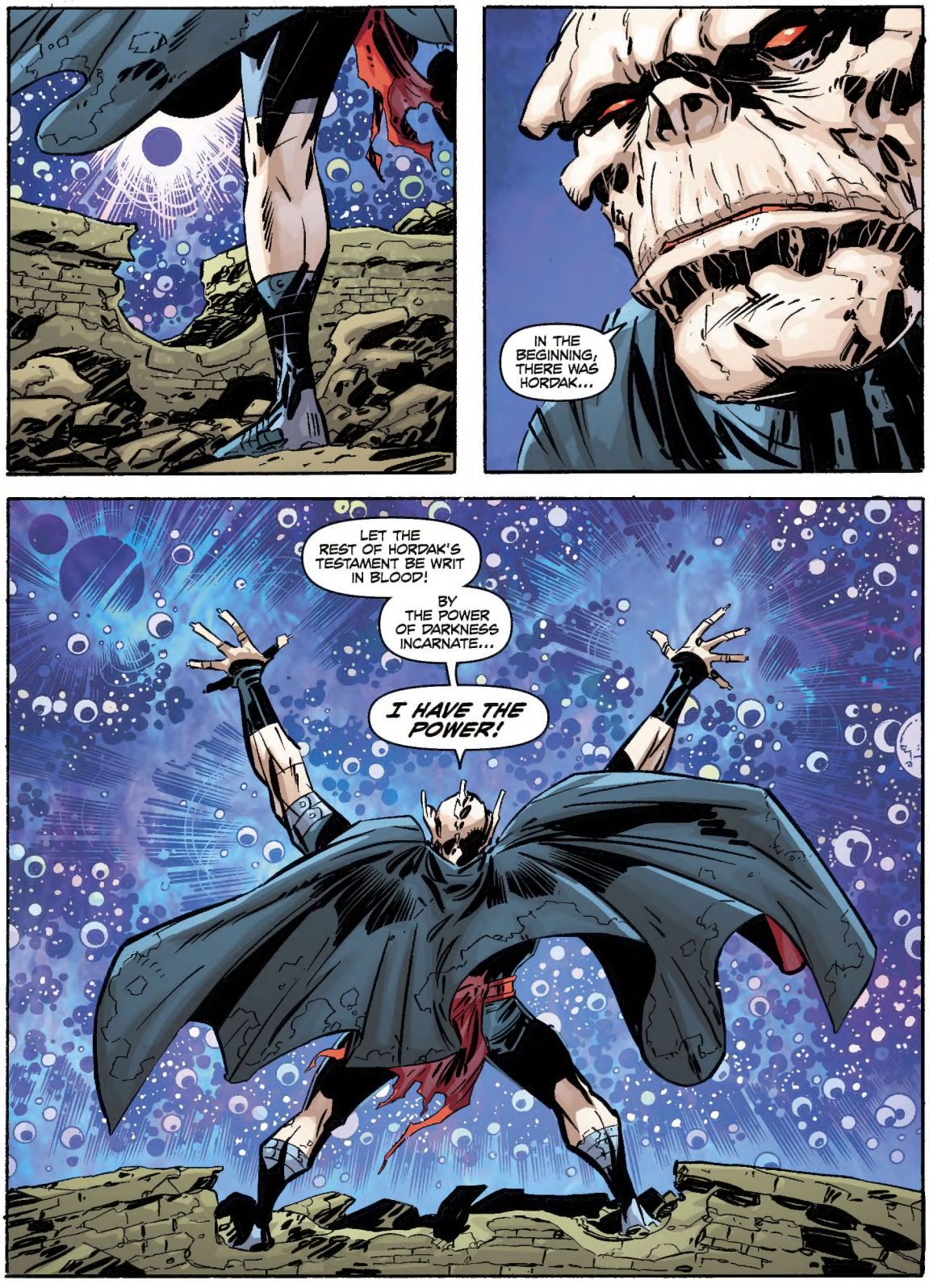

SO CERTAIN OF YOURSELF... SO DEDICATED TO YOUR IDEALS... SO EASILY MANIPULATED.
EVERY DEFEAT I SUFFERED AT YOUR HANDS, HOWEVER IGNOMINOUS, I LEARNED FROM. EVERY DEFEAT WAS A STEPPING STONE TO THIS VERY MOMENT!

AND WHAT DID YOUR, SO CALLED, VICTORIES TEACH YOU? ARROGANCE. OVERCONFIDENCE. DISDAIN.
YOU. LEARNED. NOTHING.

YOU FOUGHT A HORDAK WHO NO LONGER EXISTED! YOU FOUGHT THE HORDAK OF OUR YOUTH AND NEVER ONCE STOPPED TO CONSIDER HOW IT COULD BE THAT THE FALLACIES OF YOUTH WERE CARRIED OVER INTO ADULTHOOD.
ALL A SHAM, BROTHER. ALL IN SERVICE TO *THIS* GLORIOUS MOMENT.

JOIN ME.

RE-REJECT YOU... I R-REJECT...
I EXPECTED NO LESS.


IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS HORDAK...
LET THE REST OF HORDAK'S TESTAMENT BE WRIT IN BLOOD!
BY THE POWER OF DARKNESS INCARNATE...
I HAVE THE POWER!

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